

The LAST SPEECHES, DYING WORDS, and CONFESSIONS of JAMES CHAMBERS  
and WILLIAM COLLINS,

Who were executed on the Town-Moor, near Newcastle upon Tyne, on Friday the 27th of August,  
1784, for robbing Mr Jasper Anderson, on the Highway.

IT is customary to make, and no less so to expect a Speech from me in my present situation. I can assure the public, it is not so much from its being the custom, as from feeling it my duty, I ever was prevailed upon to declare my dying sentiments: From having been long addicted to the ways of vice, and from following the impulse of my own heart, and from knowing and being too well acquainted with wickedness in all its varieties, I am not the less qualified, and not the less willing to give the opinion of a dying man upon it. I do solemnly declare, that the more I disobeyed my God, the oftener I injured my neighbour, or broke through the laws of society, I ever felt a punishment in my sin: I have ever found guilt and wretchedness to be one and the same thing.

Born of honest and industrious parents, I began life under the impression of their councils and admonitions, I lived till the twentieth year of my age, free from the grosser breaches of duty: After that period I got into loose and graceless company, who encouraged me boldly to commit iniquity; they deluded me from the sober paths of industry, and taught me all their bad practices. I am sorry to say, I have found the very persons that began to teach me, the most active to bring me to my untimely end: I mention this from the best motive, to reclaim those who have done so, and who surviving me must be conscious of it; and at the same time I do it to assure the thoughtless and wicked, that there can be no secure friendship among the unprincipled and irreligious. Were I to give a short history of my life, it would appear wicked beyond conception; I see my manifold sins and transgressions: It has been for the last seven years an uninterrupted course of folly and madness. Besides several robberies, Sabbath-breaking, drunkenness, and profane swearing, I have to weep and mourn over a vast portion of my precious time spent in the company of lewd and wicked women, who are the ruin of young men. In the year 1777, I was tried at Durham for the robbery of a gentleman, and though acquitted, it had but little effect to reclaim me; my thoughtfulness and reformation were only temporary: After this I served some time in the Northumberland militia, and by some companions was emboldened to renew my former practices. I afterwards went aboard some ships of war, and spent my time in a very sinful and unprofitable way: The only three years of my life which give me any degree of satisfaction in the recollection, are those which I spent at Weymouth, in the south, where I made one of the impress gang; here tho' it was a post by no means desirable or happy, I was respected by my superior officers and by the whole town: This though agreeable at first, had a bad effect on a mind unprincipled as mine was; the virtuous it might have made more virtuous, but it led me into a circle of acquaintances, that gave my mind a wrong turn and confirmed me in my folly; I began to live beyond my income, and spent in a loose way what I had earned with industry: To supply my wants, and to gratify the wishes and demands of unprincipled women, I gave myself to gaming and other fraudulent methods of gaining money; this got me acquainted with a set of daring and wicked creatures, who ruin themselves, and live on the ruins of others.

I have confessed my sins to God in a particular manner, who alone can, and I hope hath pardoned me, hoping that my death will declare the justice of his providence, that taketh the wicked in their own ways. The truth of his threatenings, and the riches of his pardoning mercy through Jesus Christ, my Saviour. I cheerfully submit to my just sentence. It is my earnest prayer that my untimely end may be

a serious warning to all who have been my brothers in iniquity, or may be in danger of being led away with the error of the wicked. I have felt the ways of sin to be the vilest drudgery, to be the heaviest burthen. Ever restless, I thought every person I saw was my enemy, on account of my guilt. I was unhappy alone or in company, by night and by day: The sins that have proved most painful to me in recollection, are a continued breach of the Sabbath, and a contempt of Divine ordinances, repeated acts of uncleanness, fraudulent gaming, drinking, and riotous living, cursing and injuring my neighbours, by attacking them on the highways. I have sincerely wept over these, and bowed my knee frequently to the throne of grace, for the blessing of a Divine pardon. I have been directed by the spirit of God to cast my burthen of guilt on a bleeding and crucified Jesus; and though too heavy for me to bear, I hope I have found it not too heavy for my Saviour to bear. I trust all my hopes of salvation to that precious blood which he shed, and to that death which he suffered. I know in whom I have believed, and that he is able to keep that which is committed to him against that day. My sins are great, but his mercy is greater, and can exceed them. I find his mercy, and the way it is to be communicated, to be the only thing that can comfort me as a dying man. It has taken away from my mind all fear of death, and I can bless God, who hath in his own way brought me to myself, and shewed me the paths of peace and of righteousness. Not being able to read well myself, I have had some worthy clergymen who have taken great pains to inform me, by reading to me, and conversing familiarly upon the most comfortable parts of the gospel: Their labour of love, I hope, will tend to my eternal salvation. I die in charity with all men, feeling real concern for the wicked, and those who are given over to a wicked mind. I wish all soon to taste the bitterness of sin, and to taste the sweetness of mercy in the degree I have done. O that they would take a warning by me. O that they would be more awed by the Divine threatenings. O that they would listen to the calls of his word, believe his truths, love his Sabbath, reverence his name, and live to his praise and glory. I as a dying man, am persuaded that to fear God is the beginning of wisdom, and to depart from iniquity, the soundest understanding. I die an unworthy member of the church of Scotland.

I have only now to return my thanks to the Sheriff and Mr Harle, and all others who have taken any concern of my awful situation. Since I received my sentence of death, Mr Harle has studied to lighten the horrors of confinement. I have to thank all pious christians for their prayers and offices of love, with regard to my eternal salvation.

JAMES CHAMBERS.

IT will, I doubt not, be expected that I should, at this awful moment, give some account of the manner in which my life has been spent. I was previous to my being concerned with my fellow sinner, in robbing Mr Anderson.—I am a native of Ireland, and though born of reputable parents, was from my infancy accustomed to an indolent way of life: Unwilling to engage myself in the honourable employments of life, whenever industry or honesty required my exertions, they were as often shunned by a compliance with unlawful methods to gratify the wants of nature.

The sentence I have received is a very just one, and the punishment I am here going to receive, but a poor retaliation for the manifold crimes I have been guilty of.

WILLIAM COLLINS.